



Newsletter

Also published on Sway

April 2025

More Music at the Burns Club

Sunday afternoons in the Burns Club are perfect for traditional music, and our next Music at the Burns Club will be at 2pm on 11 May. Singers and musicians will play an acoustic session in the Club, and members and associate members should book early to get a seat. We charge £6 for entry to cover costs and raise some funds. Given the talents of the musicians brought together by “Banjo” Brian McKay, the entry fee is worth every penny and more.

Singers will include Jess Smith, Aileen Carr, Kevin Thompson, Sheena Wellington, Barbara Dymock, Lesely McLuckie and Wilson Omand, and instrumentalists will be Brian McKay, Coralea McKay, Steve McKay, Gordon Ewan, Scott Carnegie and Yvonne McLeod.

Instruments will be Banjo, Fiddle, Whistle, Border Pipes, Small Pipes and Piano Accordion.

To book members/associates should contact Jimmy Black on media@shelligoe.biz. Bookings will open to the public via Eventbrite on 14 April.



Singers booked for Club St Andrews Night

Following on the success of last year's St Andrews Night, the club will again celebrate Scotland's patron saint with a St Andrews Night dinner to take place on Saturday 29th of November.

Findlay Peters, the young tenor from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, has confirmed that he will attend. Tobermory Troubador Ian Macleod who entertained us so well at the Club Burns Supper will also be returning.

Folk singers Eric Wooldridge and Johnny Cormie are also hoping to attend.

Our caterer Jackie, who did an excellent job last year, has been booked and tickets will be available closer to the time.

Who was George Gilfillan?

The club has recently received several sets of *Burns Works* edited by the Rev George Gilfillan. But who was George Gilfillan?

Gilfillan was a radical and one of our founding members, serving as the first President of the club. His popularity is attested to by the church named after him in Whitehall Crescent.

We asked AI to tell us more: The Rev. George Gilfillan (1813–1878) was a Scottish minister, literary critic, and essayist known for his eloquent preaching, enthusiastic championing of Romantic poets, and his role in promoting Scottish literature during the 19th century.

Born in Comrie, Perthshire, Gilfillan studied at the University of Glasgow before becoming a minister in the United Presbyterian Church. In 1836, he was appointed minister of the School Wynd Church in Dundee, where he served for over 40 years. His sermons, known for their literary and emotional depth, attracted large congregations and established his reputation as a compelling orator.

Gilfillan was a passionate advocate for literature and became widely known through his critical essays and introductions to various poetic works. His most famous literary work was *A Gallery of Literary Portraits* (1845–1854), a series of essays on poets and writers, including Burns, Byron, Shelley, and Wordsworth. His writing was marked by a grand, sometimes exaggerated style, which made him popular among Victorian readers but also led some critics to dismiss him as overly sentimental or lacking scholarly rigour.

He also edited several editions of Robert Burns' poetry, though his editorial style, often moralistic and interpretive, was not as influential as other scholarly editions of Burns' work.

Gilfillan played a crucial role in championing the work of young poets, including William McGonagall, who is now infamous as Scotland's "worst poet." He also helped bring attention to figures like Alexander Smith and Sydney Dobell, associated with the Spasmodic School of poetry—an experimental and highly emotional poetic movement of the time.

Though his influence waned later in his life, and he was sometimes mocked for his grandiloquent style, Gilfillan remained an important figure in 19th-century Scottish intellectual and literary circles. His work reflects the Victorian fascination with literature as a moral and spiritual force.



Burns Supper dates set for next year

The three Burns Suppers organised by the club this year were all financially successful and, most importantly, enjoyable! A big thanks to all who attended and took part.

Jimmy Black's piping skills were appreciated at all three events. Duncan Erskine and his grey mare Meg gave a memorable rendition of 'Tam O'Shanter' while Bob Steele impressed with the 'Twa Dugs.'

Dates have been set for next year's Burns Suppers as follows: Dundee Lawyers' Burns Supper will take place on Saturday January 17. The Club members' Burns Supper will take place the following week on Saturday 24th January and the mixed Burns Supper will take place on Saturday January 31.

Club event to celebrate Ukrainian poet a great success

The Club held a successful celebration of the Ukrainian poet and hero, Taras Shevchenko and our own Bard, Robert Burns, on 9th March. Organised in partnership with HMS Unicorn's Ukrainians Together project, Club Members and Ukrainian visitors enjoyed a cultural exchange which included talks about Burns and Shevchenko, songs and recitations.

Bob Steele gave the talk on Burns; Lindsay and Jacqui provided the pies and sandwiches, piped in by the President; Eric Wooldridge sang; Vitalii and Olena and several other Ukrainian guests recited; and the pool table kept some of the young people entertained.

This may have been the first time children have attended an event in the Burns Club? To make this possible, and also to allow the sale of alcohol to non members, we applied for an occasional licence from Dundee City Council's Licensing Board.



David Morrison

Booking the Club

Two organisations recently booked the Club for business meetings. Local maritime charity Taymara held their "away day" and Dundee East SNP used the club for a meeting to nominate a candidate for the next Holyrood election. In both cases Club President Jimmy Black offered to open the club, and both organisations paid a fee.

Taymara's David Morrison joined up as an Associate Member, having found the collection of historic books in the Library of particular interest.

Currently the Club has mobile broadband which makes the room more attractive for business meetings. Our ability to accept bookings depends on the availability of members and associate members to open and close the Club rooms.

May Day at the Burns Club

Mike Arnott, Vice President of Dundee Burns Club, will host a gathering of trades unionists in the Club following the local May Day Rally on 3 May.

The Burns Club has a long association with Dundee Trades Council – one of our former members David Taylor, a leading Scottish trade unionist, joined the club in 1880 and served as both President of Dundee Burns Club and Secretary of Dundee Trades Council.

Mike Arnott, is the current secretary of Dundee TUC and a former President of the Scottish Trades Union Congress. Mike is well known for his work commemorating the sacrifices made by local volunteers in the Spanish Civil War.



The gathering at the club will begin at approximately 2 pm as the rally ends.

Club talk on William Soutar

Club member Paul Philppou has recently compiled and edited a new two volume edition of the works of Perth poet William Soutar in Scots and English.

Paul has kindly donated a handsome set of the new collection to the club library and will give a short talk on Soutar at our next meeting on Wednesday April 9 at 1.00pm.

By way of background, William Soutar (1898–1943) was a Scottish poet and diarist, known for his contributions to Scots-language poetry. Born in Perth, Scotland, he showed literary talent from a young age and later studied at the University of Edinburgh.

Soutar wrote in both English and Scots. He was a socialist and a pacifist with much of his poetry reflecting themes of nature, Scottish identity, and personal suffering. His work includes lyric poetry, children's verse, and aphorisms.

A key aspect of his life was his battle with ankylosing spondylitis, a progressive disease that left him bedridden from his late twenties. Despite this, he continued to write, keeping a powerful diary that provided insight into his thoughts on literature, politics, and spirituality.

William Soutar, sculpture by Benno Schotz



Paul Phillipou

Some of his notable works include:

- Seeds in the Wind (1933) – a collection of Scots verse.
- Diaries of a Dying Man (published posthumously), offering a poignant reflection on his final years.

Soutar is regarded as an important figure in the Scottish literary revival of the early 20th century, and his work continues to be celebrated today.

News round up ...

Burns at the Festival

A new one man show featuring the life of Robert Burns will premiere at the 2025 Edinburgh Festival Fringe. A joint production between the National Trust for Scotland and theatre maker James Clements, the play is based on the Trust's recently digitised collection of Burns' manuscripts, letters, poems, and artefacts.

Turks Head

In 1787 Robert Burns passed under the sign of the Turk's Head Inn in George Street, Montrose, presumably to take refreshment on his tour of the North East. The sign has survived to the present day, partly through the conservation work commissioned by local businessman Raymond Sutton and partner Julia Colla.

Montrose Burns Club's archivist and Past President, Graeme Newton, arranged for the sign to be donated to the Montrose Museum, and an exact copy has been provided to Raymond and Julia to take the place of the original in their home.



Burns Favourite Tipple?

In “The Author’s Earnest Cry and Prayer” Burns wrote “Freedom and whisky gang thegither”, but which whisky? Scottish Licensed Trade News reported in January that Burns mentions two whiskies in his poetry. The first is the defunct Rosshire distillery of Ferintosh, which enjoyed duty free status as compensation for being sacked by Jacobites in 1689. When duty was reimposed and the distillery closed, Burns wrote ...

“Thee Ferintosh! Oh sadly lost!

Scotland lament frae coast to coast!” (Scotch Drink)

The other was Kilbagie, a producer of industrial spirit to be made into gin, mentioned in the Jolly Beggars; possibly this was the lowland whisky he referred to as “rascally liquor” in a letter.

From Compost Heap to Engine Shed



A rare, possibly unique, cast iron statue of Robert Burns has found its way back to Scotland and now resides at Historic Environment Scotland’s Engine Shed in Stirling.

Discovered in 1953 on a compost heap in Durban, South Africa, the statue was bought in 2013 by Paul and Alexandra Morris and brought back to their home in Alloway.

They donated it to Historic Environment Scotland who restored the original colours and displayed it at Doors Open Day in September 2024.

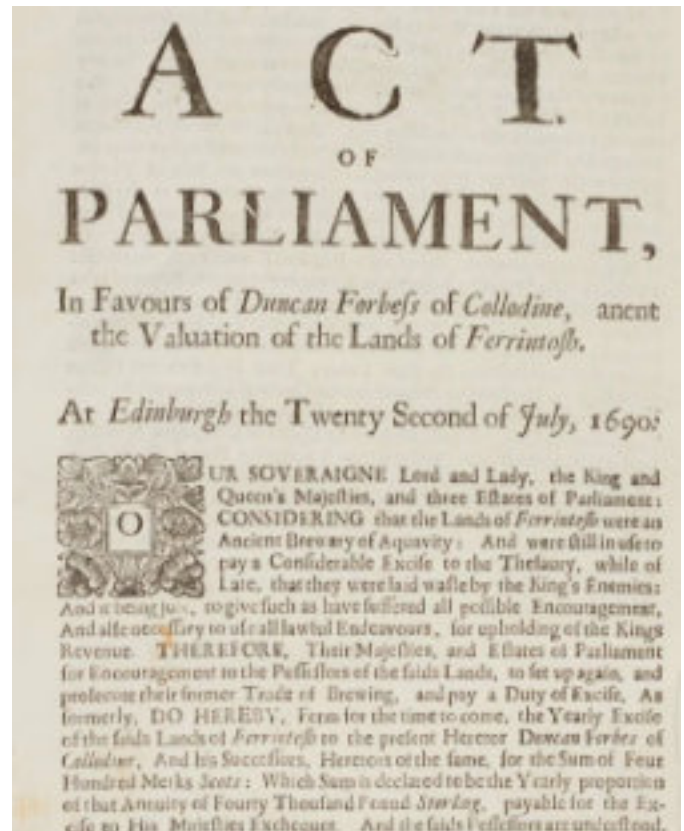
The statue is not just important as a representation of the Bard; it illustrates traditional metal working techniques employed by the innovative iron founders who produced high quality work. Cast at McFarlane’s Foundry in approximately 1900, the sculptor was David Stevenson.

“Very rare” Burns portrait sells for 168 times guide price

A painting of Burns ‘in the manner of Sir Henry Raeburn’ has sold for £84,320, approximately 168 times the estimated price.

Cleared from a house in Surrey, the portrait is thought to have been inspired by the famous Nasmyth painting of the Bard.

Four telephone bidders and numerous online callers wrestled for ten minutes to acquire the painting.





Pictures from our Scotland/Ukraine event

Top left - Jimmy Black and Bob Steele bring in the pies

Top Right - Unicorn CEO Dr Andrew Tibbs with Shona Robison MSP

Left - Members and Ukrainian guests sing Auld Lang Syne

Music At The Burns Club

Sunday 11 May

£6 from Eventbrite



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